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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

Intelligence Community Staff

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6 AUG 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: NSCIC Working Group

SUBJECT: RONI

1. Per approval of the DCI and after discussion at USIB I am sending you the most recent edition of the Review of National Intelligence (RONI), prepared in my staff. We plan to produce the next issue sometime in October, and to make that and subsequent issues available to you on a regular basis.

2. RONI has met with a largely positive response within the Community, and a number of people outside my staff seem eager to contribute articles or letters to it. We welcome such contributions, and hope that consumers will also respond with comments, questions, and frank criticism where necessary. We would like to publish consumers' views, with their permission of course.

3. We do not consider a given issue of the RONI as the final word on the Community products addressed in it, but at least each RONI provides a basis for an exchange of views on how to make product improvements. We can and do update material published in the RONI; our initial conclusions on the Mayaguez affair are a case in point. Also, from time to time we will include material on a variety of topics directly requested by the DCI.

4. I look forward to your comments on the RONI.

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Samuel V. Wilson
Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy to the DCI for the
Intelligence Community

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Point Paper on RONI for Pre-USIB of 29 July

29 July 1975

--No extended or detailed discussion of RONI needed at USIB; so much of it is now out of date.

--Sample reactions to this issue: General Graham has not yet responded to query; Mr. Hyland says he likes it very much and finds it useful; George Allen (IAS) responded with very thoughtful and perhaps provocative letter in re RONI's treatment of Indochina; CGAS/DDI finds the second issue an improvement over the first and views RONI as an established publication.

--We hope next issue can be produced in October; question is, should we include statistical charts which have raised numbers of questions? In their present form they do not seem so far to be useful.

--Dissemination: We still need to make the decision about RONI's dissem outside the Community. This prospect creates real concern, but we think the members of the NSCIC Working Group should receive it. A common complaint about RONI is that it does not adequately represent the consumers' views; one good way to solicit such views would be through the further dissemination of RONI.

(Note to General Wilson: On Periodical Survey, which is not on formal agenda, we have suggested that DCI mention at USIB the existence of this study and remind principals an update ^{is} due in December.)

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24 July 1975

The Editors
Review of National Intelligence
Product Review Division
Intelligence Community Staff

Sirs:

As a more-or-less close observer of the agony of Indochina over the past 25 years, I feel compelled to offer an early comment on the "very preliminary look" at the Community's coverage during the final months in the June RONI. Over the years, the Community generally has done a credible job of analyzing the capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, and likely courses of action of the Communists in Indochina than of the non-Communists. This was true in the French war in the early 50's, as well as in the 60's and 70's. Most of the "shock" developments throughout these three decades have been related to the unanticipated failures or deficiencies of the non-Communists--political and military--in coping with foreseen levels of Communist capabilities and pressures.

- The only "real" surprise of the Diem Bien Phu campaign was the paralysis of the French command--and its loss of nerve--when confronted with the reality of the onslaught by Viet Minh forces whose strength and preparations had been assessed accurately and in detail by intelligence. The confident "let them come" challenge by the French on the eve of battle was replaced by shock and dismay when their artillery and air support proved ineffective in breaking up the expected Communist assaults.

- The late 50's and early 60's were marked by misplaced confidence in the anticipated performance of Vietnamese military and security forces against the well-defined and clearly growing Viet Cong threat.

- The real "shock" of the Tet offensive stemmed primarily from exaggerated perceptions of the cumulative effects of the application of U.S. military power over the preceding two-and-a-half years, rather than from a lack of indications of an impending major enemy offensive.

- In the final denouement, the surprise factor--as noted in RONI--was the collapse of ARVN (when the realization hit home at all levels that ARVN would no longer be supported in the manner to which it had become accustomed, i.e., the B-52's would never return), rather than the accurately assessed weight of enemy pressure.

- This record clearly highlights a long-standing source of frustration to intelligence analysts and their consumers--that of making net assessments in "real-world" situations when inputs on one

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side of the equation are influenced by the subjective views and judgments of operating officials committed to the successful execution of policies, strategies and programs. Too often is the net judgment subverted or dominated by the overconfident and insistent views of operators and policy-makers concerning the "progress" achieved by friendly activities: The "success" of Operation Atlante and the expansion of the Vietnamese Army in 1953-54; the impact of U.S. training for ARVN in 1956-62; the effectiveness of U.S. search and destroy operations in 1965-67; the "success" of Vietnamization in 1973-75, inter alia.

Although the intelligence appraisals were often less than perfect, they were generally more pessimistic--or realistic--than the judgments of the operating officials. But the impartial intelligence appraisals were often discounted or ignored, or in some cases simply watered down, by the more subjective, optimistic--and influential--views of the operators.

Clearly, one lesson to be learned from our Indochina experience is the need to evolve a mechanism for providing the policy maker with truly objective net assessments in situations where the U.S. is operationally committed--a mechanism that will effectively blend, if not balance, the voices of the Pollyannas with those of the Cassandras. The record of Indochina to the end shows that the influence of the Pollyannas was unduly prominent, to the detriment of the national interests of the U.S. and of the Vietnamese and American peoples.



GEORGE W. ALLEN
Director
Imagery Analysis Service

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